



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JOSH ZEPNICK
WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

December 5, 2007

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice
Representative Joel Kleefisch, Chair

Dear Chairman Kleefisch and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee:

As the lead author of AB 525 I would like to thank you for holding a public hearing on this bill.

AB 525 attempts to address the growing problem of crimes against employees of the city of Milwaukee while they are performing their official duties. This bill was drafted at the request of the City of Milwaukee and its employees, specifically city inspectors. Currently, there are increased penalties for a person who commits battery against certain government officials, employees, and agents, such as law enforcement officers or fire fighters. LRB 07-2416/1 extends these increased penalties to employees enforcing state, county, or city rules, laws, or ordinances. The particular persons this bill is intended to protect are building inspectors.

Under current law, a person who intentionally causes bodily harm to another without the other person's consent commits the crime of ordinary battery. A person convicted of ordinary battery may be fined not more than \$10,000, imprisoned for not more than nine months, or both. Current law provides more severe penalties for battery committed under certain circumstances against certain government officials, employees, and agents. Current law also prohibits threatening to cause bodily harm to some of those individuals under certain circumstances. Under this bill, if a person intentionally causes bodily harm or threatens to cause bodily harm to an employee of a first class city, other than a law enforcement officer or fire fighter, the person may be fined not more than \$10,000, sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than six years, or both.

Every day Milwaukee city employees put themselves into harms way enforcing the city and state's codes. For them to effectively do their jobs and serve all parts of the city it is necessary for these employees to occasionally have contact with sometimes hostile citizens. This legislation will provide extra protections for these people who are just trying to do their jobs and serve the city of Milwaukee.

I would like to thank Chairman Kleefisch and the members of the Criminal Justice Committee again for having a public hearing on AB 525, and I respectfully request that the committee give its unanimous support to this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Josh Zepnick
State Representative
9th Assembly District

CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Interdepartmental Correspondence

December 5, 2007

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice
Representative Joel Kleefisch, Chair

First and foremost, Representative Kleefisch, and members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice, thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 525.

I am here today in support of Assembly Bill 525, a piece of legislation that is very important for the City of Milwaukee. Our city inspectors enforce State and City property, maintenance, construction and use regulations. We often have to deliver unpopular news that requires building owners to have to change their priorities in order to comply with the laws and codes of Wisconsin and Milwaukee.

Our staff is in the field and inside buildings unarmed and without escort. At most, they have a cell phone and a flashlight. Unfortunately, our line of work brings us into contact with dangerous individuals, but this is a part of the job. You have read many times where the Milwaukee Police Department has closed down a drug house 90% of the time it is really the Department of Neighborhood Services inspectors ordering the building to be vacated due to habitability violations. While that inspector may be with a police officer during that process, the very next day that same inspector may be answering a complaint next door or inspecting another building owned by that same owner. We work in a risky environment at times.

All I ask is that we be given the same level of protection by statute that the legislature has already provided to the State of Wisconsin inspectors who are enforcing some of the exact same laws outside of the City of Milwaukee.

Please rectify our second class status when it comes to having this level of protection in the field.

Sincerely,

Martin G. Collins
Commissioner
Department of Neighborhood Services
Milwaukee, WI